

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF COUNTER TERRORISM AND FOREIGN POLICY OF PAKISTAN DURING PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF'S ERA (1999-2008)

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ABSTRACT

The incident 9/11 represented a critical threshold in Pakistan's foreign policy. In order to avoid the "wrong side" of a "wounded" super power made Pakistan a vital ally in the US-led anti-terrorism coalition. Pakistan once again acquired the status of a front-line state. The president of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf's declaration of allying with the West in the "war on terror" has changed the direction of Pakistan's foreign policy from breeding the government of Taliban in Afghanistan by declaring them terrorists. He decided to conduct military operation in the area of FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), the first ever operation by military on its own land and claimed great successes in the pursuit of terrorist by killing about 400 extremists who belonged to the terror group Al-Qaida. The relations with India have become more tense and has enhanced its strategic relations with China despite the serious reservations of USA and other western countries. Pakistan's image has been distorted in the comity of Nations for playing double game in the "War on Terror" which was a failure of Musharraf's regime to assure the world of Pakistan's anti-terrorists stance. While trying to analyze the foreign and counter terrorism policy during the era of Musharraf since 1999 till 2008, we have tried to find out the impacts of such policies on the socio-economic and political domain of the state of Pakistan.

KEYWORDS: Wrong Side, Wounded, War on Terror, FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), Socio-Economic and Political Domain

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INTRODUCTION

Military intervention in political affairs and taking over the government has remained the core issue of political history of Pakistan. Since independence, the country has experienced military in government four times directly and throughout the history indirectly. Pakistan army is considered an important stakeholder in the formation of internal and foreign policy of the country, particularly with regards to neighbors like India and Afghanistan. It has been mentioned that the role of army in Pakistan is that of "moderators" who has remained in power since the inception of Pakistan. It has remained in touch with political skirmishes behind the scene to protect its interest and maintain the status quo or whenever it got the opportunity, it has directly seized governmental powers. For instance, Pakistan army behaved as a "moderator" when there was civilian rule of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in the country from 1971 till 1977 and during the two terms rule of his daughter Ms. Benazir Bhutto first time from 1988 till 1990 and then in the second term from 1994 till 1996 and in the era of another civilian Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif first from 1990 to 1993 and then with the inception of his rule with two third majority in the parliament from 1997 till 1999. But whenever, it has felt that civilian leadership of the country is threatening its economic and corporate privileges, it has directly intervened in the political affairs by the overthrowing the civilian

leadership through Martial Law. As in the case of the first Martial Law chief administrator field Marshal Ayub Khan from 1958 till 1969 and his follower Yahy Khan (1969-1971), General Zia ul Haq (1977-1988). Last but not the least dictator of Pakistan was General Parvez Musharraf who overthrew the civilian government in 1999 and became the chief executive of the country. Whereas, the two Ayoub and Yaya were forced to leave political affairs to the civilian leadership, Zia died in an airplane crash and the fourth is still in power.¹

It was the dawn of 2003 in which Musharraf announced in lucid words "This is not a Warsaw Pact vs. NATO situation where warheads and missiles are ready to fire with a button in hand. There is no button in our case. The missiles and warheads are not permitted together. There is a geographical separation between them".² In the year 2007 Defense Department of USA blamed Pakistan that it had assembled all the parts of the Nuclear bombs and as a matter of fact it could be prepared for war in a matter of minutes.³

Although it has been claimed by Musharraf at several occasions that a strict action has been taken against the militants who are fighting in Kashmir but still the Indian view is clear from the opinion of the state minister of India who says that Pakistan's efforts will not be accepted unless the Kashmir based militancy does not minimize and the endeavors of Musharraf are of no value unless he shows determination in true sense to eradicate extremism and his anti Indian role in the past.⁴

The relationship between USA and Pakistan is not that good as it has been claimed. An important aspect of the relationship between the two countries is difference over the definition of the term "terrorism" and the dangers which are having its roots in Iraq, Afghanistan and India. Moreover, Pakistan's own role in the wars of others is also creating existential threat. According to Barnett Rubin the rise of militant activities in Afghanistan is the feeble security prospect of Pakistan in the northern Pashtoon dominated areas of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) but it is not right that Pakistan is backing these militant forces.⁵

Since last five years, the United States has stretched more than ten billion dollars of aid to Pakistan in terms of military equipment support and socio-economic development. It has been said that this amount has been used by the army for its conduct of several military actions against the militants and hardliners. For instance, Musharraf has mentioned in his book that for the arrest of the Al-Qaida members, CIA would pay millions of dollars to the government of Pakistan.⁶

It has been reported by Rober Nolan that the US government threatened Pakistan with dire consequences in case it denied supporting the US in its war on terror. As a result Musharraf the than President of Pakistan declared wholehearted support to America with the hope that US would come to rescue the shattering economy of Pakistan and help Pakistan in

¹ Eric Allen Nordlinger. *Soldiers in Politics: Military coups and Governments*, Englewood Cliffs: NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977, p.7.

² Pervaiz Musharraf. *In the Line of Fire*, London: Simon and Schuster,, 2006.

³ David Sanger. "So What about These Nukes?" *New York Times*, 11 November 2007, p. 2.

⁴ "Indian State Minister of External Affairs." *Daily Times*, 2 December 2005, p. 1.

⁵ Barnett Rubin. "Saving Afghanistan." *Foreing Affairs*, Vol.86, No.1. 2007, pp. 57-78.

⁶ Pervaiz Musharraf. *In the Line of Fire*, London: Simon and Schuster, 2006, p. 237.

the resolution of Kashmir issue.⁷

Pakistan is neither helping US in its war in Afghanistan nor does it let the US come out of Afghanistan. As Pakistan have its own strategic and diplomatic interests in Afghanistan. Some observers are of the opinion that Pakistan is trying to secure its interests over India on Afghan land. Therefore, it is a bad omen for the US-led coalition against the militants in Afghanistan.

There were about seven major militant attacks in the year 2007 which took place in Pakistan. It was the backlash of the terrorists against the military operations in FATA. The chief of these terrorists was Baitullah Mehsud who made his own group and declared war on Pakistan army in 2007. But military successfully put down the rebellion with iron hand. It was reported that the damage caused to Pakistan by the war on terror was about 35 billion dollars.⁸

RE-FORMATION OF FOREIGN POLICY

Due to the dismissal of Musharraf as Army chief by the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif, for the fourth time military stepped in into the civilian power corridor. Moreover, the Sharif's efforts of establishing peace with India after the defeat in Kargil war had also annoyed the army and as a result the government of Nawaz Sharif was overthrown.⁹

Thus in the absence of civilian leadership in the formation of foreign policy, Pakistan stood isolated in the comity of Nations in the era of Musharraf. In the beginning, he could not get support of the west and neighboring countries. But the event of 9 September changed the direction of Pakistan's foreign policy. Musharraf declared alliance with the US but could not avail the chance properly in the pursuit of national interests.¹⁰

During these circumstances the attack on twin towers of America changed the course of Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan had to join the US-led coalition in the war on terror as non NATO ally. Consequently, Pakistan's U-turn policy towards Taliban had a serious backlash in terms of people and finance. Though the government had an opportunity to deal with the situation tactically but personal interests were kept at the cost of national interest but on the other hand the organizational setup of the terrorist is far more coherent and up to the mark. As a result the government has lost the efficiency to deal with these extremist groups.¹¹

The incident of 9/11 had deep imprints on the cause of Kashmir and other related issues. India is convincing the world that is being victimized by the militants in Kashmir. Though it is clear the base of Kashmir issue is political not extremist and this cause has no relation with the elements of militancy. The objectives of these extremists groups are in contradiction to that of Kashmiri and Palestinian fighters. The extremist groups have their own ideology and financing system which is quite different from that of the Kashmiris. The challenge in dealing with these militants is not an easy one

⁷ Robert Nolan. "Document 12, Musharraf's address to teh nation." IPRI, Journal, Vol 11, No. 1, 2002, pp. 145-146.

⁸ "Pak-US Business Council." 2009.

⁹ Ayesha Siddiqa Agha. *Military Inc.:Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. London: Pluto Press, 2007, p. 99.

¹⁰ Lawerence Ziring. *Pakistan at the Crosscurrent of History*. Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2004, p. 271.

¹¹ Anas Malik. *Political survival in Pakistan Beyond Ideology*. New York: Rutledge, 2011.152-180.

because of their widespread fundamentalist ground work and their disintegration would take time.¹²

WAR ON TERROR

On the very date of thirteenth of September just four days after the 9/11 attacks on world trade center, the President of Pakistan declared “principled stand” with the coalition of the west in the auspices of USA in the war on terror. Though there was great crisis of trust towards USA in its dealings and promises with Pakistan and the regional rivals, Musharraf took the side of the USA in the war on terror to evade the possible repercussions. In his address to the people of Pakistan he pledged to provide assistance to coalition troops in the shape of logistics, air fields and intelligence sharing in the pursuit of so called terrorists. Though there was a great resentment among the common people of Pakistan because the people of Pakistan hate the state policies of USA, the Pakistani government did not give consideration to the sentiments of people and allowed US operation from inside the land of Pakistan.¹³

It has been mentioned by the economic and political weekly that it was fast move and outdated to take an unilateral decision by President Musharraf to side with USA led coalition in the so called “war on terror”. Because in the course of long term and political thought, it will damage the foreign policy objectives of Pakistan and its direction of pursuing foreign policy objective. Among these damages the most important is maintaining relations with India as most of the time army men have been proved inefficient in dealing with its immediate neighbor India. The suggestion of limiting armament was cunning and obsolete for our country.

Moreover, the state of Pakistan has been in extreme kind of difficulties since the break up of the country in 1971 and there is an existential threat to the country. Because the re-mobilization of the terrorists of Al-Qaida and Taliban the tribal regions of the country are posing serious threats to the internal security of the country. On the other hand US is constantly blaming Pakistan for playing on both sides of the security horizons. Therefore, the military minds are unable and inefficient to calculate the circumstances and the get back the country on the right track from the turmoil through diplomatic and political means.

Therefore, the need of the hour is to change the mindset of the people regarding the concept of Jihad which is prevalent and dominant in the society in general while in the country in particular. There is a need to establish a direct corollary with the immediate neighbor in its maintenance of relationship¹⁴ Musharraf was no more a person with good leadership in the country as he was losing popularity. Because the hardliners of the country were labeling him as a puppet in the hands of Americans due to his full-fledged support to the US led coalition in the “war on terror” and now there were multi-dimensional challenges ahead of him to deal with. With the pronouncement and imposition of emergency in the country which many of Pakistani consider as another military attack on the liberty of the citizens has angered the civil society and the lawyer’s groups and the political parties of the country who have now taken to the streets to protest against his dictatorial actions. Moreover, the greatest threat to the stability of the democratic countries was the fresh wave of violent activities in the shape of Taliban’s re-mobilization. The slow and steady momentum which the violent groups were getting had challenged the state’s writ in many parts of the country. The religious parties were opposing him on the pretext

¹² Mohammad Amir Rana, *Gateway to Terrorism*, London: New Millennium, 2003, pp. 229-30.

¹³ Chrestine Fair, "The Counter Terror Coalitions Cooperation with India and Pakistan." *Project Air Force*, 2004, p. 14.

¹⁴ Karamat. "The Bigger Picture in Pakistan." *Economic and Political weekly*, 2008, pp. 5-6.

of pursuing such policies which were befitting the western countries. The extremist attacks in the rural regions of Afghanistan and Indian held Kashmir was creating not only a grave threat to the security and stability of South Asian regions but also the parts of Europe and American people can be victimized at the hands of religious fundamentalists who were being trained in the unruly areas of Pakistan. Therefore, the western democracies were silent over the dictatorial action of Musharraf and his orders of depriving the people of Pakistan of fundamental rights. Thus, they did not want the reluctance of the dictator.¹⁵ (Shaikh 18-19).

MILITARY IN THE MOUNTAINS

It was the year 2002 in which the military regime led by Musharraf decided to conduct military operation in the area of FATA. The first ever operation by military on its own land led to the death and injuries of hundreds of thousands of people on the ground. But still the Pak army claimed great successes in the pursuit of terrorist by killing about 400 extremists who belonged to the terror group Al-Qaida. Moreover, on the demand of US, another operation was launched in Waziristan in which more than 300 terrorists lost their lives. As a result of these operation, there was immense reluctance among the common people which led the country towards chaos and instability. In addition, once again army conducted another operation in tribal areas and claimed that I had killed more than 600 terrorists by giving the heads of about two hundred soldiers. On the other hand, western media kept on blaming Pakistan of double standards.¹⁶

In the beginning of the North Waziristan military operation proved to be failure because of the distance between military and the masses as the people were never in support of the military actions against the people of North Waziristan.¹⁷

There was a militant revival in the beginning of 2006 when the terrorists crossed the Afghan border into Pakistan to avenge the military operations in the tribal areas and formed Tehrik Taliban Pakistan. On the other hand, in 2007 among the growing violence in the country, government decided to go for presidential and parliamentary elections. But President Musharraf declared emergency and suspended the popular Chief Justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudry, which led to further violence and instability in the country. But after from internal and external pressure Musharraf had to arrange elections in the beginning of 2008.¹⁸

PUBLIC DISCONTENT

In his first official visit to Saudi Arabi as the President of Pakistan, General Musharraf announced the priorities of the contemporary government for the socio-economic and political uplift of the country. The top priorities were declared as boosting up of the declining economy of the country, alleviating the poverty rate so that the gap between the rich and poor can be minimized and bringing back stability in terms of politics in the country.¹⁹

¹⁵ Farzana Shaikh, "Luck Running Out." *The World Today*, 2007, pp. 18-19.

¹⁶ Masood Khan, Pakistan's role in Global War on Terrorism and the areas of Clash, 2005.

¹⁷ Samina Ahmad. "Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants." *Crisis Group Asia Report*, No. 125, 2011.

¹⁸ Laura King, "Quitting army a risky proposition for Musharraf", *Los Angeles Times*, 2007.

¹⁹ Asi, Nausheen, Nabiha Gul and Maria Saifuddin Effendi. "Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Quarterly Survey." *Pakistan Institute of Interantional Affairs*, April-June 2002, pp. 1-10.

There are concerns in certain quarter of the intellectual calls in the country over the implementation of Musharraf's policies and their possible repercussions. Though he seems successful in the pursuit of implanting his policies as far evidences are concerned but still it is difficult to guess what will be the future circumstances in the country. As the Taliban's way to Afghanistan has been hindered and the Taliban seems to have lost the momentum to give tough time to the security agencies. Therefore, it is perhaps really troublesome for them to rise again and challenge the security establishment of Pakistan.

In addition, there seems a kind of discontent among the public with the policies of Musharraf in particular from the religious fraternity of the country. Moreover, there are suspicions over the maintenance of integrity of organizations in the country's intelligence and security agencies. Indeed Muasharraf has retaliated powerfully to the top head of the ISI by sidelining him and others of his mentality.²⁰

In an interview with an anchor of a commercial TV channel, it was suggested by the president that they should "rest at home" and try to abstain from demonstrative politics as such demonstrations are leading toward chaos and law and order is disturbed. It was in reaction to that particular question asked from him about the barbaric action of police on the innocent and calm demonstrators of journalists and lawyer's fraternity on the date twenty nine September 2007 against Musharraf's decision to contest the upcoming presidential elections and his papers were in the process of scrutiny.²¹

CONCLUSIONS

General Retired Parvez Musharraf remained in power for about nine years in which he has taken such great decisions of importance which has left deep imprints on Pakistani society. Particularly his counter terrorism and Foreign Policy experienced major changes. Following are the impacts of his counter terrorism policies.

- First, it has highly sensitized the religious section of the society as he has been accused of being coward and puppet in the hands of Americans and the west due to his anti religious activities like that of the Lal Masjid operation.
- His operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas has created chaos in the society as the backlash of the terrorist is so severe that it has taken the lives of hundreds and thousands of innocent people of Pakistan.
- Moreover, his policies have deepened the crisis of sectarianism in the country as the hardliners are spreading their ideology by the use of force and subduing the other sects.

The major changes brought by the Musharraf regime are the following.

- His declaration of allying with the west in "The war on terror" has changed the direction of Pakistan's foreign policy from breeding the government of Taliban in Afghanistan by declaring them terrorists.
- The relations with India has become more tense as India still blames Pakistan for supporting Kashmir freedom fighters and Pakistan blames India for creating and supporting insurgents in Balochistan.
- Moreover, in terms of foreign policy formation, Pakistan has enhanced its strategic relations with China despite

²⁰ Ejaz Haider, "Dramatic Reversal." *The World Today*, 2002, pp. 4-6.

²¹ Afiya Shehrbano, "A Political Conversation in Pakistan." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2007, pp. 80-81.

the serious reservations of USA and other western countries.

At last the image of Pakistan has been remained distorted and negative in the comity of Nations for playing double game in the "War on Terror" which was a failure of Musharraf's regime to assure the world of Pakistan's anti-terrorists stance.

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